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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR AND HUMAN RIGHTS OMBUDSMAN DISCUSS
VIOLENCE AGAINST HUMAN RIGHTS WORKERS

1. (SBU) Summary: Ambassador Hamilton met with Human Rights Ombudsman Sergio Morales on June 26 to express concern over the recent murder of an Auxiliary Ombudsman and new threats against human rights defenders and journalists. The Ambassador also praised Morales' efforts to promote the prompt establishment of an International Commission to Investigate Clandestine Groups (CICIACS). After the meeting, the Ambassador condemned the murder and intimidation in comments to the press. End Summary.

2. (SBU) On June 26, the Ambassador and HROff met with Human Rights Ombudsman Sergio Morales to express condolences for the recent murder of Chimaltenango Auxiliary Ombudsman Israel Lopez. The Ambassador also expressed concern to Morales about threats against fourteen other auxiliary Ombudsmen, and briefed the Ombudsman about USG diplomatic efforts to urge the GOG to protect the Ombudsman and human rights defenders. The Ambassador pledged further moral and technical support. Morales thanked the Ambassador for all of his efforts and said that USG assistance is an important pillar of support for human rights work in Guatemala. Morales also praised newly-named prosecutor Thelma de Lam for the excellent job she is doing of investigating the Lopez murder.

3. (SBU) The Ambassador expressed our concern over the June 24 domestic break-in and threatening of El Periodico publisher Jose Ruben Zamora. Morales agreed that this was a troubling incident that merited a quick and thorough investigation, which he and his staff were doing their best to provide. Morales also mentioned that six different journalists had been threatened in different parts of the country over the previous 72 hours, and that he was worried about them as well.

4. (SBU) Morales said he hoped the new wave of violence against human rights activists, journalists, and justice operators would justify the human rights community's urgency to see the commission to investigate clandestine groups (CICIACS) established quickly. Morales said that he, Foreign Minister Gutierrez, and human rights leaders were looking forward to UN Rep Predendergrast's visit on July 4, as well as the UN technical mission in mid-July. The Ambassador commended Morales' leadership on the CICIACS and reiterated USG support for the expeditious establishment of CICIACS.

5. (U) In statements to the press on departure from the Ombudsman's office, the Ambassador condemned the murder of Auxiliary Ombudsman Israel Lopez and called for a thorough investigation. He said that the international community remains concerned over the intimidation of human rights workers, and expressed the hope that the Government would bring to justice those who are making these threats.

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